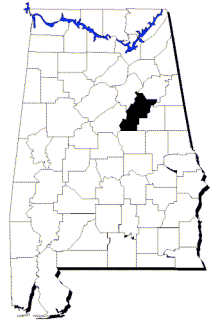


TALLADEGA COUNTY

Honorable George N. Sims

Talladega County Courthouse
P.O. Box 1238
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(256) 249-1005



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Kelly Wesley Lakey
Alan Watson
Louis Zook
Dennis Surret
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Ronny Jones
Jimmy Kilgore
Robert Rumsey

Council Priorities

1. All children will have an adult caretaker who provides a safe and drug-free environment.

Support and expand family support programs-specifically those that address parenting skills development through currently existing infrastructure such as The family resource centers, child care/Head Start and Rehabilitation Services.

2. Children and families will have access to the resources necessary for self-sufficiency, health and independence.

Systems of support will be well coordinated at the state, county, and local levels to assure that resources are accessible to families and delivered in a user friendly, cost effective, accountable manner.

3. Every child should enter school prepared to learn what is taught in school.

In order to insure that Alabama children succeed in school and become contributing and law abiding adults, a system of early care and education based on scientifically-based research combined with the collaboration of supporting programs and services is needed. Factors related to accomplishing the desired outcome include establishing quality standards for early care and education related to language, literacy and numeracy, the identification/adoption of appropriate outcome-based curriculum, access to mental health services for children 0 to 5, education and training of providers specific to quality, curriculum and child development, and sufficient funding for programs that promote school readiness such as Pre-K, HIPPY, subsidized child care, Parents and Teachers, and other similar programs.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Language and literacy

Action Steps

- 1) Ensure alignment with state course of study for kindergarten.
- 2) Continue to encourage childcare providers to select curriculum rich in language experiences and vocabulary development appropriate to infant, toddler, and pre-school age groups.
- 3) Continue to develop a system for the distribution of language-development information targeted to parents and the general public to enable adults to assist children in building language skills and becoming school ready.
- 4) Continue to support efforts by Child Care Central to offer training to childcare providers and parents in developmentally appropriate school readiness language activities and curriculum.
- 5) Continued advocacy for additional state and federal quality enhancement funding.
- 6) Continued advocacy for additional funding for childcare subsidy and pre-k programs.
- 7) Advocate for additional funding for family literacy programs including HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters), Imagination Library, Parents as Teachers, and Reading is Fundamental.

Disruptive behavior

Action Steps

- 1) Develop a partnership with the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Cheaha Mental Health to develop a system for referrals for children in childcare to professional mental health services.
- 2) Continue to educate stakeholders on the correlation between children's mental health, school readiness, and success in school.
- 3) Continued advocacy for a system of mental health referral and services for children 0 to 5 years of age.

School readiness

Action Steps

- 1) Continued advocacy for universal state sponsored Pre-K programs.
- 2) Continued to support efforts by Child Care Central to continue offering training to child care providers on successful "school readiness" models, curriculum, and outcome based planning for early care and education.
- 3) Continued advocacy for and partner in all efforts to secure funding for programs such as Imagination Library, HIPPY, and Parents as Teachers, Head Start, subsidized child care, Pre-K, Child's Haven, and other programs serving children 0 to 5.
- 4) Continued advocacy for additional state and federal funding for programs that promote school readiness for children 0 to 5.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Employability skills (job skills and work ethic)

Action Steps

- 1) Create working relationship and partner with community businesses to commit goal of becoming "family friendly."
- 2) Business and community leaders should become committed to improving the lives of children.
- 3) Promote jobs for school age children to train for entering the workplace.
- 4) Need for more caregivers for children and adults in need of caretakers to free up employees and potential employees.
- 5) Promote role of Parent(s)
 - a. Identify staff at each school that would serve as a contact to connect parent(s) to necessary resources when deficits are identified and/or reported of parenting skills or housing needs. Daycares should also be contacted-those regulated through DHR could be educated on resources available (Family Service Centers, Head Start, Children's Rehab Services, etc.) so that when needs are identified referrals can be made.

Adult illiteracy

Action Steps

- 1) Create greater availability of adult education programs.
- 2) Expand business coalition to promote participation of employees in literacy programs.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

High School Graduation

Action Steps

- 1) Continue to support the State Department of Education "Recommended Policies and Procedures for Court/School Truancy Prevention and Conduct Intervention," as revised by the local school systems.
- 2) Support the court/school intervention program, which includes representatives from the Children's Policy Council (Juvenile Court, District Attorney's Office, Family Service Centers, DHR, Mental Health, and Health Department) that participates in the Early Warning Program provided by the Juvenile Court. The Family Service Centers are utilized as the point of contact and coordination. The Electronic Management Information System is the point of entry and coordination of services for the purpose of communication, tracking and non-duplication of services, and assessment of services provided to targeted youth and families.

Alternative education programs

Action Steps

- 1) Support the process whereby contact information for all school levels or non-completers is submitted to the Director of Adult Education by each local system. A reasonable effort will be made by the Adult Education Program to enroll each student. Follow-up data concerning enrollment in adult education or employment training will be maintained by the Director of Adult Education.
- 2) Develop and implement a process whereby contact information for juveniles with mental health issues is submitted to local mental health authorities. A reasonable effort will be made by mental health officials to follow up on referrals. Follow-up data concerning referrals will be maintained by mental health and school system officials.
- 3) Review local alternative school programs and make recommendations based on *No Child Left Behind* legislation, Juvenile Court guidelines, and local school systems' policies and procedures.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Access to physical, mental health, and dental care

Action Steps

- 1) Development and implementation of comprehensive management system to assure that each child is able to be physically and mentally well.
- 2) Work with local mental health providers to try to get services in a timelier manner.
- 3) Development and implementation for the education outreach and navigation of the system's health programs for the uninsured and the underinsured.
- 4) Continue to promote enrollment in the CHIP program.
- 5) Development of a county resource committee to act as a safety net for children.

Teen pregnancy

Action Steps

- 1) Development program for professionals in the community to go into schools to teach abstinence, making correct life choices, prevention and consequences.
- 2) Every school system should have a school nurse and social worker.
- 3) Expand programs offered through the Talladega County Health Department with the addition of a Community Development Specialist.
- 4) Expand and support the Fatherhood Initiative Parenting Intervention and Health Care Initiative Programs.

Chronic disease in children: diabetes, asthma, hypertension, and depression

Action Steps

- 1) Identify a network of referral resources for education and support of families' with children who have chronic diseases.
- 2) Utilize the Parish Nurse Program for support of children with chronic diseases.
- 3) Parent education in elementary schools to prevent diabetes and hypertension.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Parenting skills

Action Steps

- 1) Expand existing programs such as SFE Family Services Center, FIRST Family Service Center, child care, Head Start, and Children's Rehabilitation Services providing family and parenting support.
- 2) Continue parenting support programs within target areas such as Talladega Housing Authority and the Sylacauga Housing Authority residence communities.
- 3) Increase the awareness of the parents' important role in a child's life through an advocacy campaign to target adequate state funding.

Life skills

Action Steps

- 1) Publicize community resources related to access to GED, Adult Education, and Life Skills training and support programs.
- 2) Continue to expand existing literacy efforts such as Imagination Library, Reading is Fundamental, Even Start, and Home Instruction Program for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, and Parents as Teachers.
- 3) Maintain services for adult and family literacy programs to non-traditional hours that are family friendly.
- 4) Continue collaboration across systems specifically Post Secondary Education and community-based agencies to provide comprehensive job readiness training programs targeting low literacy adults.
- 5) Continue the development of career specific training for high school students through business and industry collaborative.
- 6) Provide resources to enhance the role of school guidance counselors in supporting transitions into the workplace for struggling students specifically in developing alternatives to school drop-out.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Safe communities

Action Steps

- 1) Develop services for parents and children needing to be drug free.
- 2) Require family participation in all activities required by the court and other agencies.
- 3) Advocate for strict enforcement of sentencing regarding drugs.
- 4) Advocate for court-ordered structured step-down program for juveniles who complete substance abuse programs per a court order.

Ineffective parental involvement regarding safety of children

Action Steps

- 1) Identification of existing problems, which have a component regarding parental responsibility.
- 2) Modify existing programs to include model in "how to raise your children."
- 3) Insure the development of support services such as childcare, transportation and accessible times for parental participation in the parenting classes.
- 4) Identify and require participation by parents when children are involved with Juvenile system, Department of Human Resources, or other agency referrals.
- 5) Provide local publicity through newspapers and agency referrals for the availability of the parental programs.

Policy Recommendations

- Development of early care and education curriculum guidelines with emphasis on outcomes, which encompass language, literacy, and school readiness.
- Development of state mental health systems of referral and intervention for children ages 0 to 5.
- Acknowledgement that providing quality care and education programs for ages 0 to 5 is less costly and more effective than rehabilitating adolescents with regard to both monetary and societal impact by adequately funding quality care and education programs for ages 0 to 5.
- Truancy prevention/intervention: A) school/court truancy and conduct Early Warning Program B) School social workers C) Additional school nurses D) Additional school counselors for at-risk students E) Support and expand Family Service Centers F) Flexibility in use of state funds.
- Alternative Education Program: Expand innovative alternative education opportunities for academic and behavioral needs.
- State agencies should work in a collaborative manner in the coordination of resources and funding that are available at the local and county levels to deliver these resources that are driven by the ability of that county/community to demonstrate the capacity for collaboration and partnership.
- Parental responsibility programs will be required in all juvenile programs.
- Advocacy for speedy judicial process.
- Require a court-ordered step-down program for DYS-committed youth once they are released from a DYS drug programs before they return to their home.
- Provide adequate and/or increased funding for programs such as: A) Subsidized child care B) Universal Pre-K C) Medicaid D) Education E) School social workers in every school F) Job readiness training programs G) Parenting Programs H) Prevention Programs I) Early intervention programs J) After school programs K) Public/rural transportation programs L) Job Access Reverse Commute Programs (JARC.)

Accomplishments

- Talladega County Schools were awarded a 21st Century grant to fund after school programs.
- Every public elementary school in county 3 systems is Alabama Reading Initiative trained.
- Imagination Library under the sponsorship of FIRST Family Service Center and the Talladega County Education Foundation was extended to every child ages birth to five years living in Talladega County and Talladega City School zones.
- Eighty-eight children on the subsidized child care waiting list for more than two years were awarded child care in Talladega County through the Child Care Central Child Care Management Agency.
- More than 225 hours of professional development and training were made available to providers of child care in Talladega County by the Child Care Central Quality Enhancement Program.
- Sylacauga was named one of the "100 Best Communities in the Nation For Young People" and featured in Newsweek magazine as one of ten communities in "A Taste of the Best".
- First Tee, Pursell Farms Youth Development Program, was featured as a model program in Golf Digest.
- Talladega County in conjunction with SAFE Family Service Center was awarded a three year "Unified Prevention Systems" grant for the development of comprehensive strategies for the prevention of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use among youth.
- Children's Dental Clinic at the Talladega County Department of Public Health in Talladega opened in March 2006.
- A Primary Healthcare Clinic at the Talladega County Department of Public Health in Talladega opened in June 2006.
- Establishment of a general practice doctor's office now housed in the Talladega County Health Department as of June 26, 2006 for persons with or without medical insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare patients.
- Due to needs cited in past Needs Assessments, a VISTA worker from Alabama Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy was assigned to Talladega County, based in the Talladega County Health Department.
- Tri-Systems Learning Center, an alternative school, was created several years ago after needs cited and identified by members of the Talladega County Children's Policy Council. It serves all three of the county's school systems and Juvenile Court with each having their specified number of placement slots – with thirty students (basically Middle School thru High School) being the maximum number on roll at any time. The main goal is to work towards students being able to re-enter their base school and it has served as an alternative to expulsion for many. There have been students that were able to graduate from their respective base school while earning credit and attending Tri-Systems.